1: Lee H-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1 Yugoslavia

642 668 under Liapchev (1926-31) sought to reduce party strife and international friction. It secured a loan from the League of Nations to help in the settlement of refugees, but seemed powerless to prevent raids upon neighboring states by the IMRO which, after the assassination of Protoguerov in 1928, was dominated by Mihailov who openly defied the Sofia government and virtually reigned supreme in some frontier districts. The elections of June, 1931 brought a shift again to the left. The cabinets of Alexander Malinov and his successor, Nikola Mushanov, both of whom were Democrats representing middle class and intellectual groups, were supported by the Agrarians. This coalition found itself threatened by the rise of the Communist party which nearly captured a majority in the Sofia municipal elections of September, 1932. In the communal elections of November, however, the Agrarians and Democrats won a victory which emboldened them in an attempt to suppress both the Communists and the Macedonians in the following year.

643 669 642 Meanwhile Tsar Boris III, had steadily gained in authority and influence. The rapprochement with Italy signalized by the marriage of Boris to the daughter of King Victor Emmanuel III in 1930, and the part played by the Tsar in steps taken toward reconciliation with Yugoslavia and Romania (1933-34) helped to bring him to the fore. Then a series of domestic events enabled the Tsar to make himself a virtual dictator. Colonel Velchev, secretary of the Military League founded in 1930, and Kimon Georgiev, prominent in *Zveno* which was a fascistic civilian organization working for reform and a "strong" government, again helped to stage a *coup d'état*, May, 1934, ousting the Democratic-Agrarian Coalition and making Georgiev premier of a dictatorial government with Velchev as his principal adviser. Parliament was dismissed and political parties dissolved by decree. Vigorous action was taken against IMRO, forcing Mihailov to flee. Most of the promises of the new government, however, and especially the solution of the financial crisis, remained unfulfilled. Velchev's known hostility toward Boris III and his alleged republicanism alienated older army circles which helped to supplant Georgiev by General Zlatev who had the backing of the Tsar. Continued financial mismanagement and a reaction within the army itself to its political activities paved the way for a return to civilian government and the dissolution of the Military League after several of its members, including Velchev, had been convicted of conspiracy. This left Boris III master of the situation, although he proclaimed his intention of restoring constitutional rule.

646 666 Since the anomolous political situation within the country brought an inevitable reaction against the regime, elections for a new *sobranie* were

1: Lee H-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1
Yugoslavia

eventually held in March, 1938, under a changed electoral law which permitted married women to vote but forbade candidates to run as members of the old political parties. In May, 1938, the *sobranie* met for the first time since 1935, but found itself reduced to the position of a consulting body.

The political crises of the period after 1933 were but outward expressions of the serious economic condition in which Bulgaria, along with all other predominantly agrarian countries of eastern Europe, had found itself as a result of the world-wide economic depression. At the same time both Italy and Germany sought to bring Bulgaria into their political and economic orbits. Bulgaria for several years seemed to waver between them and their rivals in power politics. Although its refusal to join the Balkan Entente, because of its revisionist territorial claims, seemed to align Bulgaria with Italy, a tense situation was avoided by the signature of a Pact of Friendship with Yugoslavia on January 24, 1937. In 1938 when the east European atmosphere had become clouded because of Germany's annexation of Austria and the developing Munich crisis, Bulgaria gained recognition of the right to rearm by means of an agreement in July with Greece who acted on behalf of the Balkan Entente. This was followed by an Anglo-French loan amounting to ten million dollars to assist in Bulgarian rearmament, although Germany had already supplied much material toward this end. Nevertheless, Germany had two advantages over its rivals. One was its freedom to encourage Bulgarian revisionist ambitions which, after the Bulgar-Yugoslav pact, tended to create greatest tension with Romania over the Dobruja. The other was the powerful economic tie developed between the two countries by means of trade agreements. After Austria and part of Czechoslovakia had been incorporated in the Nazi Reich in 1939 about 52 per cent of Bulgaria's exports went to Germany and about 63 per cent of its imports came from there.

It is doubtful, however, if the developing ties with Germany influenced the feelings of the Bulgarian people. Tsar Boris and his governments, even though they sanctioned agreements by which the political police cooperated with the Gestapo in pursuing "Communists," sought to keep down native fascism. There was, moreover, very little antisemitism in Bulgaria. The political opposition composed of the former Agrarian, Liberal, Radical, Socialist, and Democratic party elements, was by its nature antagonistic to Nazism. And, finally, the people had always retained a deepseated feeling of sympathy and respect for Russia against whom the Nazis were ostensibly aligned. Indeed, right down to 1941 there was much ground for believing that Bulgaria might well maintain neutrality in the second World War.

1: Lee H-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1
Yugoslavia EF1

Y 648 fusing to attend the conference called at Paris to consider the Marshall Plan for European reconstruction, Yugoslavia manifested her determination to stand by Soviet Russia economically as well as politically.

B 642 648 665 *The Fatherland Front in Bulgaria*

In attempting to fulfill the terms of the armistice and to prepare for parliamentary elections, the Georgiev government in Bulgaria, like that of Tito in Yugoslavia, was accused of pursuing totalitarian tactics. The United States and Great Britain entered protests against the conduct of the elections of November, 1945, in which 88 per cent of the vote was reported to be in favor of the Fatherland Front. The effort of the two powers to bring about the admission to the government of two representatives of "other democratic groups" proved unavailing, despite the agreement of Soviet Russia to the proposal at the Moscow Conference in December. [666] The National Assembly which chose Vassil Kolarov, a Communist, to be its president, arranged for a plebiscite, September 9, 1946, on the form of government. When the results went overwhelmingly in favor of a republic, the Assembly on September 15, declared Bulgaria to be a People's Republic. Elections in October, following the drafting of a constitution, returned an Assembly less predominantly Communist than Yugoslavia's, though whether this outcome was designed or came about because of a failure to crush the opposition effectively is not clear. The Fatherland Front majority of 366 deputies was made up of 279 Communists (Workers' Party), sixty-nine dissident Agrarians, nine *Zveno* members, eight dissident Social Democrats, and one Radical; while the opposition of 99 was composed of ninety Agrarians under the leadership of Petkov, and nine Social Democrats led by Lelchev.[10] In November Georgiev resigned as premier and was succeeded by Georgi Dimitrov, an eminent Communist who had been made famous by the Reichstag Fire Trial in 1934 and had been living in Russia until the end of the war. Like Yugoslavia, Bulgaria had entered upon the path of a Soviet-orientated state.

Peacemaking and Foreign Relations

Y-B 648 Beginning with the United Nations Conference on International Organization at San Francisco in 1945, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, whenever represented or discussed at international conferences, have been led or supported by Soviet Russia. Thus they are both aligned with the "Eastern"

[10] For a brief description of the elections and the policies of the Dimitrov regime by a sympathetic observer, see Commander Edgar P. Young, "'People's Republic Bulgaria'," *Contemporary Review*, CLXXI (March, 1947), 162-66.

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

a *paterfamilias,* with a unique concentration of power in his hands. 596
If his grown children did not submit to his control, then they could 178
leave his house but had no means of removing him against his will.
Death alone could do that.

Such was the family situation in Dragalevtsy with the coming 178
of liberation after the Russo-Turkish War in 1878. The changes 642
which have occurred in the family since then have been related in 596
no small degree to the political fortunes of Bulgaria. The Bulgarian
constitution was drawn up in Tirnovo in imitation of the constitutions
of the West, and made Bulgaria a constitutional monarchy with a
national parliament. Unfortunately, the new frame of government
disregarded many traditional practices of the peasants and sought to
impose upon them foreign ideas and strange governmental processes.

In April, 1879, Alexander of Battenberg, who was an officer 175
in the Prussian army and the favorite nephew of Tsar Alexander II
of Russia, was elected Prince over the country. In September, 1885,
Bulgaria united with Eastern Rumelia, an area which had been placed
back under nominal Turkish control by the Treaty of Berlin. Prince
Alexander, because he did not collaborate sufficiently with the Russians
in their desire to make Bulgaria completely subservient to Russia, was
abducted from Sofia and forced to abdicate in 1886. Then the Bul-
garian leaders shopped around Europe for another Prince, and finally
in 1887 chose Prince Ferdinand of the Saxe-Coburg-Gotha line. He
did much to make Bulgaria a stronger state, but he showed poor judg-
ment in ordering Bulgarian troops to attack Serbia, thereby starting
the Second Balkan War in which Bulgaria suffered catastrophic defeat
at the hands of her former allies in the First Balkan War. In 1918,
because he had been a party to the alliance of Bulgaria with the Cen-
tral Powers in the First World War, he was forced to abdicate in
favor of his son Boris.

From her inception as a state Bulgaria tried to make a success 642
of representative government. Men were urged to vote; in fact, they 666
were fined the equivalent of five dollars if they failed to vote. But in [687]
spite of the dream of Young Bulgaria at Tirnovo, in spite of her

642 666 vibrant youth and living hope, her fling at democracy failed, primarily because ballots were given to peasants who were not being taught the meaning of citizenship in a national state.

178 623 Those interested in democracy have much to learn from the story of government in Dragalevtsy. At the outset the informal rule of the elders, which had been recognized by the Turks, was replaced by a commune or *obshtina* with regularly elected officials. At first these units included a number of villages. By 1890 the increase in population necessitated the breaking up of the larger *obshtini* so as to include only two or three villages. In other words, the pendulum was swinging back in the direction of greater local control, the swing being further accentuated after the First World War.

665 Political parties grew like mushrooms in Bulgaria. In 1930 the country had more than sixteen significant parties; in the village of Dragalevtsy, with its total population of about sixteen hundred, there [557] were six important parties with recognized leaders and platforms. To be a party leader in the village meant added prestige; to be one in the city or on a national scale meant power. In order for a Dragalevtsy man to become a local party leader he had to be acquainted with important people in Sofia. Even though he had only one influential friend in the city, he could persuade this man to come out and help organize a party. Other peasants were invited to the organizational meeting and officers were elected. Naturally, the one who took the initiative would be chosen to an important post. Because of the multiplicity of parties and the intense strife among them, many people throughout the country breathed a sigh of relief when the authoritarian government, which came into power on May 19, 1934, abolished by decree all political parties and started the practice of appointing uni- [622] versity graduates as mayors in villages. This meant that the head of the government in a village was not dependent upon the will of the populace but had to produce results satisfactory to the officials over him. The breakdown of the party system was associated, especially as far as the conservative peasant population was concerned, not only with forces outside the village but also with the failure of popular education to develop into "a bulwark of people rule."

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

623 Local administration of justice was not the only thing the mayor had changed. Upon his arrival in Dragalevtsy he had replaced the traditional Village Council, composed of peasants, with an Advisory Council, made up of other public officials. Later, when the national authorities wanted to restore the appearance of representative government they worked out a scheme for establishing a new Commune Council. They took care, however, to rid it of any candidates that they did not like.

666 623 On March 28, 1937, six councilors were elected for the Dragalevtsy commune: three from Dragalevtsy proper, two from Simeonovo, and one from the "quarter" near Sofia. In addition to these six, the following were ex officio members of the council: the mayor, the representative of merchants, the representative of the agricultural zadruga, the director of the school, the physician, and the veterinarian. To obtain its three members, the village of Dragalevtsy was divided into three districts, from each of which one representative was chosen. Any man over thirty and with an elementary school education who signed the following petition could nominate himself as a candidate for office.

To the Judge of the Commune
in the village of_____
County _____

PETITION

With this I wish to declare:

1. that I wish to offer my candidacy for a village councilor in the elections which will take place on _____ 19__ for the purpose of electing members of the commune councils.
2. that I offer my candidacy in _____ elective district of _____ commune _____ county.
3. that I do not belong to any secret or open organization forbidden by the laws of the country.
4. that I do not have ideas against the government, that I am not in favor of communist, anarchist or violent methods for social and political struggles.
5. that if I am elected as a commune councilor I will not favor any class, society, groups, nor will I serve my personal interests, and in my work I shall be guided by the common interests of the commune of which I am a member, and

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

6. that I have been registered under No._____ in the election list of the commune. 666 623

I wish to have my candidacy recognized as legal and confirmed.

I enclose certificate No._____ from _____ 19__ year issued from _____ commune, which shows that:

(a) I have the right to elections (commune elections)

(b) that I am 30 years of age and have completed my military service (or the regular labor service)

(c) that I have completed _____ (education)

Village, City _____ year 19__

Respectfully:_____

The names of those wishing to run were posted publicly by the mayor; all the villagers had the opportunity to contest the fitness of any candidate; afterwards the mayor sent the names to Sofia with his own recommendations. The final decision was in the hands of the judge in Sofia. Thirteen Dragalevtsy men decided to stand for election. Three of these were rejected by the authorities. People from each district voted only for a candidate from their district. Mothers were the only women permitted to vote.

Before the election, with the permission of the mayor, the candidates were allowed to make speeches. After the election, as is frequently the case in countries elsewhere, some people were dissatisfied with the results and demanded a new election. However, everything seemed to go off in an orderly way and the voting was fairly done. This election, though, was the prelude to the national elections which were later held, resulting in the restoration, after a fashion, of the *Subranie,* or National Parliament.

Re-establishing a commune council seemed to be a very complicated affair to the average peasant, and afforded quite a contrast to his usual way of getting things done. In order to fulfill the law requiring ex officio members to represent the merchants and the agriculturists, two new organizations had to be started in the village before the time of the election. The merchants organized a Merchants' Association, had one or two meetings, elected a representative, and discussed general policies for the future. Although nothing definite had taken shape by the time I left the village, the merchants hoped to 623 441 241

2:Sanders E-5 (-o date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

[661] munists, they were traitors. The priest still considered them children 668 of God and officiated anyway, although they were not buried in the local cemetery.

[665] By the New Year, 1945, many of the political leaders in the 648 Fatherland Front discerned the handwriting on the wall. The Agrarians and the Democratic party especially recognized the Front for what it was—a Communist screen for actual control. All the while, the Communists—a minority party—had been growing stronger and were nurtured by the Red Army officers who really directed Bulgarian affairs. British and American army officers were represented in the Allied Control Commission which was under arbitrary Russian direction. American and British diplomatic representatives were somewhat more effectual, but only within a rather limited sphere of activity. With the cards stacked in their favor, the Communists controlled the key ministries, chief among them being the Ministry of Interior which had charge of the police and local administration. Therefore, early in 1945 there was a gradual loss of popular enthusiasm for the Fatherland Front, with the real defection coming in May. At that time the leading representatives of the Agrarian and Democratic parties, as well as a section of the Socialist party, withdrew from the Front to form an opposition. In Dragalevtsy, this move met with tremendous support, for there the Agrarian was the major party. The Zveno group, which had engineered the *coup d'état* of 1934 against the king, stayed with the Fatherland Front in which they held the premiership and other prominent positions.

A few former acquaintances of mine had joined the Communist party and were sincerely trying to win their fellow countrymen to their cause. They were inclined to be impatient with those who differed from them, and still felt very much on the defensive. Their condescending attitude toward members of other parties co-operating with them in the Fatherland Front was expressed in a comment making the round: "Oh, these other members of the Front are our water boys.' They'll carry the water to the top of the hill for us and then we'll take it over."

[666] The next political crisis arose in August, 1945. The government had scheduled an election through which it had planned to obtain a

2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

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parliament, whose first duty would have been to approve the previous actions of the government and to give the Front broad powers to continue on its way of reform and reconstruction. Because of the claims by the opposition—those who had withdrawn from the Fatherland Front—that they were not being given a fair chance for representation in the elections, the American and British governments insisted that the elections be postponed and threatened to recognize no government coming into power under the proposed arrangements. The elections were postponed. Most Dragalevtsy people again wholeheartedly approved.

But that was the heyday of the opposition. Those who did not like the way matters were moving put their faith in America and expected her to stop further Communistic consolidation within the country. In the taverns of Dragalevtsy the buzzing must have reminded one of bees in a swarm when the Agrarian leader of the opposition, Georgi M. Dimitrov, sought refuge with the American Political Representative, Maynard B. Barnes, and spent part of the time in Barnes's villa near the Sofia-Dragalevtsy highway, with a handful of American soldiers on guard to protect Dimitrov whose life was endangered. The American authorities assumed some personal risks in sheltering him, and eventually secured his departure from the country. Thus, in the minds of the people as well as in the minds of the Bulgarian authorities, America more and more became identified as the chief support of the opposition and as an enemy of the new state being created. Because lines of antagonism had been drawn so sharply, the peasants of the opposition asked, "When will the war between America and Russia take place?" Those favoring the government asked in an uncertain tone, "Will there be a war between America and Russia?"

News of the atomic bomb gave the opposition increased hope since many of them expected America to use the bomb immediately as a threat in the bargaining and jockeying going on between the Western and Eastern powers.

American popularity rode another high wave when Secretary of State Byrnes sent Mark Ethridge to Bulgaria and Rumania to make a study of the situations in these two countries. Mr. Ethridge, a well known Louisville, Kentucky, newspaperman and a keen student of in-

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

ternational affairs, conducted himself with such astuteness that he became almost a legendary figure in a short time. In fact, he enters this account in an authentic way because he visited Dragalevtsy quite unexpectedly, ate meat balls at the tavern with the peasants, and endeared himself in particular by treating the crowd to two or three rounds of drinks. "Setting up the house" was a practice none too common in the frugal economy that characterized the village. Most of those present spoke quite freely, but two Russian soldiers, definitely ill-at-ease, remained stolidly silent. One old villager did throw caution to the winds and sidled up to tell the distinguished guest, "We are not satisfied, Mr. Ethridge. Don't believe all of the things these young fellows have been telling you." Mr. Ethridge, upon leaving the tavern, was surprised to see Renaissance Square filled with enthusiastic villagers, who cheered him and presented him with many bouquets of flowers.

Later the Secretary of State's special emissary wrote a critical report on the existing Bulgarian government and pointed out what he judged to be its undemocratic features. The American representatives were unable, however, to persuade the Bulgarian authorities to postpone the elections for a second time, so the voting went off as scheduled on November 18, 1945, with the opposition groups abstaining from the balloting.

In spite of these political developments, the peasants in the Agrarian party (the majority in Dragalevtsy) continued to regard Mr. Barnes and Mr. Ethridge in a favorable light. They like to tell stories of the way these Americans supposedly outwitted the Bulgarian authorities. One of these stories, with no foundation in fact, shows how rumors rise in the Balkans. Mr. Ethridge and his small party were said to have visited a concentration camp for political prisoners near Dupnitsa. Since they were planning to visit the historic and beautifully situated Rila Monastery, they obtained permission to stop off en route at this particular camp. According to the peasants' version, when the party arrived they found comparatively few people in the camp; the place was clean, and the prisoners seemed well cared for. That was that; farewells were said and the party moved on to the Monastery. Late in the afternoon, instead of going to the provin-

2:Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

668 fruit-growing area of the country. Mr. Ethridge, in his search for the
687 truth, reputedly approached some of the local inhabitants:

"How are you getting along? Are you satisfied with conditions as they are?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Ethridge. We are quite satisfied, for this is just like Paradise [the Garden of Eden]."

The visitor was jolted a bit to hear so much enthusiasm after the many tales of woe which had been poured out to him elsewhere. "What do you mean? In what way is this like Paradise?"

"Kyustendil is just like Paradise," came the reply, "because we have plenty of apples to eat but no clothes to wear."

668 As time passed, the Communists became more determined to make their position secure. To accomplish this, Bulgarian-born Georgi Dimitrov came down from Russia, where he had once been Secretary of the Comintern, to take over active direction of party strategy. (This Georgi Dimitrov was quite a different person from the Agrarian leader, Georgi M. Dimitrov.) Occasionally peasants would joke about the high board fence around Communist Dimitrov's
● [666] yard in Sofia, built to protect him from any would-be assassin. The elections of November 18, 1945, revealed to the leaders of the National Front their relatively weak position. Great numbers of people had abstained from voting, a fact commonly interpreted as a vote for the opposition. Few foreign observers in Sofia actually believed the highly favorable figures which the government claimed in the announced election returns. In the Dragalevtsy district, for instance, thirteen hundred people had been eligible to vote. This number included for the first time all women and all young people 19 years of age and over. It also included the industrialized area, called the Mahala, which lies just below the village on the Sofia road. Approximately 800 votes were cast, of which 200 were against and 600 for the government, or Fatherland Front. Well informed people connected with the Ministry of Interior said that most of the five hundred abstainers had been peasants and that most of the votes cast for the government had come from the industrialized Mahala, which was known as a Communist center. In other words, as one village man succinctly expressed it, "Our people in Dragalevtsy are not for the present government."

11: Logio S-4 (no date) 1936 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

who had been appointed to arbitrate in various disputes with contractors of public works or to various sinecures. 661

The Socialist organ *Narod* in its issue of July 7,1931 gives some samples of the profligacy of the Liaptchev Cabinet:

„In Albania where there is one Bulgarian school, a special inspector has been sent with a monthly salary of 20,000 leva. A special delegation was sent to the Budapest mint in order to supervise and receive the silver coins ordered there, though these coins could have been easily controlled on their delivery here. Ministers Burov and Mollov have wasted millions of public money in their endless peregrinations abroad, Minister Mollov even had his decorations sent to Geneva with a special messenger in order to put them on at an official banquet etc".

Another newspaper decried the practice of granting 200 Swiss francs per day to Government delegates sent on missions abroad when delegates of other nations receive much less. (Americans were said to be paid $ 8, and Italians $ 12 per diem) Opposition newspapers daily filled their columns with details of the prevailing corruption among government circles and laid stress on the utter apathy of Liaptchev as to the consequences. The latter was reported to have said in justification: „Our foreign creditors will de obliged to come and save their investments in Bulgaria, and then they will put our finances right".

The governmental structure had for some time been shaken by internal convulsions and dangerous fissures were making themselves visible. That political amalgam, the Democratic Entente, was slowly disintegrating into its heterogeneous component parts. The Liaptchev Cabinet was never a popular one; at the legislative elections held in 1927, it received a total of 495,000 votes against 556,000 given to the Opposition parties, but succeeded in getting 163 deputies elected as against the 86 obtained by the Opposition, owing to the latter being disunited, and owing 666

666 to the majoritarian voting system being in use. There were only three districts in which it obtained clear majorities, the Rustchuk, Shumen and Plovdiv regions, in which large Moslem populations exist which invariably vote for the Government. In 1931 the mandate of the Chamber was expiring. Liaptchev felt that his Government needed new blood, and Malinov was approached and sounded as to an eventual co-operation. He demanded five ministerial portfolios. This was deemed too much. After protracted bargaining, Liaptchev was entrusted by Tsar Boris to supervise the new elections timed to be held on June 21, 1931, much to the annoyance of the general public which desired that a neutral, or coalition government, should be specially nominated to superintend this function in order that the national will might find expression and not be falsified by the usual electoral artifices and malpractices in vogue. The elections much to the surprise of all concerned, proved a success to the four Opposition parties which united to fight in common, namely the Agrarians, Democrats, Liberals and Radicals, their common lists secured the majority of the poll, the Democratic Entente was beaten, and made way for a government presided over by Malinov and later by Mushanov.

665 The advent of the new coalition government was hailed by all as a great triumph of the democratic forces and great hopes were raised. It was not fit, however, for team work and from the first it became evident that it was divided against itself by fundamental and unbridgeable divergences. The Democrats and Radicals though differing on the economic programme (the former favouring the maintenance of the existing high protective dues, the latter their revision, for the purpose of bringing prices down to the level of agricultural produce) could, had they been by themselves, have co-operated harmoniously and done much to restore order in the administration. In the eyes of the